

Comitee for territorial defence and decolonisation

Forests - The past foretold

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Introduction

A world of forests

The territory known as 'Canada' is fracturing at the seams. Throughout the land, two clamours can be heard, rising in intensity. The first is the blaring sound of extractivism produced by the unbridled rhythm of the reproduction of capital. For centuries, the drive towards destruction and death has propelled the extraction of minerals, plants and animals for profit. As a counterpoint voices have emerged out of these manufactured deserts attempting to harmonise various ways of being that are grounded on the land in order to stand up for all life forms. Today, a resurgence that stems from a distant past, haunts the colonial world. This muffled clamour has already instilled terror in those who, sensing that the time of wanton destruction is nearing an end, hasten to eradicate forests, wetlands, streams, lakes and rivers. Meanwhile, the policy of annihilation waged for centuries and directed at Indigenous Peoples has been laid bare.

During the fall, a short time before the COVID reconfinement, numerous struggles for the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples began to appear, each rooted in their own histories of opposition against extractivism, settler colonialism and the Canadian State. Since July 19, 2020, an encampment has been blocking a housing development project near Six Nations of the Grand River, the largest reserve in Canada grouping the Nations that make up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This reserve has been increasing in density within an enclosed territory plagued by pollution, all the while, Toronto, by comparison, continues its relentless and unabated suburban expansion 100 km beyond the city's boundary. The site, renamed 1492 Land Back Lane, forms part of the land that belongs to the Six Nations community according to a 1784 Treaty (Haldimand Proclamation), but the developers of the housing project are determined to expropriate it.

The eruption of rail blockades, which paralysed the Canadian settler colonial state during the 2020 Winter, was the latest expression of these rumbling voices echoing across the lands. In solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en and in opposition to the Trudeau government's pipeline projects, thousands of people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, united and showed that the railway, one of Canada's foundational myths, is nothing more than a mere thread that could easily be broken.

The intensity of the blockades and the strength they projected were interrupted by negotiations between the hereditary chiefs and the Trudeau government. Also, the need to erect new blockades was rendered impossible amidst the policing of sanitary measures put in place with the spread of COVID-19. However, the standoff has only been temporarily halted, and Wet'suwet'en grandmothers are now issuing new calls to action.

Other Haudenosaunee Nations have also been struggling to recover traditional territories that lie beyond the reserves to which they have been confined. In this vein, an encampment was pitched in downtown Toronto in support of the Six Nations struggle, while another has been set up in Akwesasne. On the East Coast in mid-September, Mi'kmaq fishers from the Sipekne'katik First Nation in central Nova Scotia launched their first self-regulated lobster fishery. In

the days that followed, rival White settler fishers showed up near the Taqmetek (Saulnierville) wharf in Digby County to steal fishing gear and slash the car tires of Indigenous fishers. On the water, settler fishers also tried to cause boating accidents and cut Mi'kmaq lobster trap lines. Later, on October 1st, one of the two lobster pounds storing Mi'kmaq catches was attacked by settlers and set ablaze. The Mi'kmaq living in so-called Nova Scotia have called for the respect of their right to hunt, fish and gather in pursuit of a moderate livelihood throughout the year, as granted in the Treaties of 1752 and 1760-61, the latter of which was affirmed by Canada's Supreme Court in the 1999 Marshall decision. Similar to the struggle at Six Nations, there is a demand to respect the treaties, not only with the aim of reclaiming territory, but also as a call to everyone to live on the land with the right to subsistence.

This year, at the beginning of sport hunting season in the La Vérendrye wildlife reserve, the Anishinabeg blocked logging roads and pitched about a dozen camps to defend the dwindling moose population. Tensions quickly mounted, but ancestral sovereignty triumphed by imposing its own moratorium on moose hunting and by ignoring an injunction that urged the Anishinabeg to allow settler hunters to pass through. For a month's time, the duration of the 'legal' hunting season, the roads – a colonial infrastructure providing settlers with access to the land – were rendered unserviceable by the blockades and used only for the purpose of defending animal life. The Algonquin-Anishinabe Nation had therefore set up camps at the centre of a site in which the catastrophic present and decolonial future converge.



Introduction

The struggle of the Anishinabeg of La Vérandrye is a reminder that the forest remains at the heart of the Canadian and Québécois settler colonial project. The appropriation and control of forested lands have always been the initial steps leading towards other forms of exploitation – agriculture, silviculture, hydroelectric dams, mineral and oil extraction. In the symbolic and material power of the forest lies a threat to the project of modernisation and an obstacle to the assimilation of Indigenous Peoples.

The forests teem with a multitude of life forms and are constituted by a lattice of overlapping territorial logics and sovereignties. To halt the invasion and destruction of the forest also means thwarting the advances of extractivist economic projects. The forest is a frontline terrain of struggle for Land Defenders and Water Protectors. This fourth issue of CDDT considers the question of the destruction of forests that, yesterday and today, persists as a fundamental component to colonial dynamics.

In the following pages, you will find a collection of five texts and two interviews. The first two texts, *The Last Forest – The Ya'nienhonnndeh* and *The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok – Grandeur of the Nitaskinan*, focus on forests that are threatened by large-scale forestry projects. Two interviews and a third text – *Hunting the Hunt* – concentrate on the struggle against sport hunting by the Anishinabew in order to preserve a healthy population of moose in La Vérendrye Wildlife Reserve. The fourth text, *What's going on at the Terrain Vague? The Steinberg Woodland in the way of the extractivist economy?* offers a broader reflection about what is at stake with a wasteland situated on the east side of Montréal Island. In opposition to perspectives that treat this situation as solely an urban planning issue, we reconceive of the space as a pawn in the colonial power's chess game: the pursuit of mass resource extraction in the North. The last text, entitled *How stop to the Mass Decimation of Forests?* concludes with a proposal for a decolonial revolution along three paths:

Resumption, Provocation and Alliance.

The CTDD

The first Committee for territorial Defence and Decolonisation was created in 2017 at the River Camp in the Mi'kmaq territory of Gespe'gewa'gi. This camp was set up in support of the Mountain Camp an occupation of an oil well near Gaspé. The drilling was stopped and the River Camp held for a year to ensure the protection of the territory.

During that time, the camp was transformed into a space of opposition to extraction and a meeting place for members of Mi'kmaq and non-native communities. Inspired by this experience and by the power of the barricades at the Mountain Camp, various groups wanted to their actions to have an echo in other territories by spreading the CTDDs. The goals were clear: to sharpen sensibilities and build a network that would make the River Camp and future decolonisation efforts more powerful. In other words, to set up the conditions for the possibility of creating links between worlds and territories fractured by colonialism, and then to make those links offensive and dangerous. Since then, oil extraction has ended (for the time being) in Gespe'gewa'gi and the River Camp has been dismantled. However, the CTDDs persist. With no preconceived structure, far from the usual reflexes of traditional militant organisations, the CTDDs respond both to the calls of First Nations to stop the assaults on their ancestral territories, while launching their own actions for the protection of land and water.

Navigating between different modes of organisation, never allowing themselves to be captured or locked into pre-established forms, CTDDs give consistency to the party of life in its struggle against the economy of death. The project of these committees has never been to create a new ecologist movement that would have, as its object, 'nature and its defence'. There is no 'defence of the environment' that would be like an ocean to be saved, a polar bear without ice floes or a forest that would have to return to its natural state. Refusing this modern/colonial rupture where a human being would tear himself away from the world by the 'power' of his/her thought means to challenge the foundations that have given rise to the current civilisational disaster. The CTDDs are animated by a willingness to experiment, combining assemblages, relation and unusual reciprocity; the horizon of which is the dismantling of Settler colonial states and the coming of new times.

The last forest

The Ya'nienhonhndeh

The Ya'nienhonhndeh (Forest of the Moïse Lake) is the last vestige of intact forest found south of the 52nd parallel. In the Wendat language, the name for this territory means 'the place where medicinal plants are gathered'. The Ya'nienhonhndeh comprises an expanse of dense pristine forest measuring roughly 320 km² and containing over 100 lakes. According to colonial cartography, the forest of Lac à Moïse is to the west of the Laurentides Wildlife Reserve and to the north of the Portneuf Wildlife Reserve. Many people from Wendake have said that, up until the 1930s, an ancestor by the name of Moïse Gros-Louis long made use of this land while carrying out traditional practices.

For several years now, logging has intensified in the pristine forest of Ya'nienhonhndeh and in surrounding areas, sites that are critical for maintaining the area's biodiversity. In 2018, an agreement between the Wendake Band Council and the government of Québec allowed for the placement of a moratorium on logging. However, in 2019 forest clearing operations still took place within the moratorium zone. According to the government and the Wendake Band Council, certain zones had already been given over to the logging industry before the moratorium was signed, thereby excluding them from the agreement. The moratorium ended in April 2020. Since then, everything has remained vague and scheduled felling operations have still not been cancelled.

A large part of the 800km² territory, encompassing over 200 lakes at the headwaters of the Batiscan, Moïse, Lightning and Metabetchouane Rivers, has already been cut down. The Wendat people want to preserve this land for future generations, but the


ruling Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) party, along with the Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, have authorised logging activities in this pristine forest with their 2018–2023 Tactical Integrated Forest Management Plan.

Ever since being implemented in 2018, CAQ's Tactical Integrated Forest Management Plan has permitted logging to take place everywhere – in protected areas, national parks, nature reserves, etc. Unsurprisingly, CAQ wants to circumvent its commitment to reaching 17% of land and water protected areas throughout Québec by 2020 while permitting 'sustainable activities'. This illustrates once again the way in which destructive forces have expropriated not only living environments, but also language itself by depriving words of their intended meaning.


Wendat people say that up until the 1930s, while hunting on the traditional territories of Lac à Moïse, they formed relations of companionship with the Innu, whose hunting grounds are close by. Since then, with the advance of settler colonisation in northern Québec, these territories have been robbed. Beyond underscoring its natural wealth, the Wendat Nation has also emphasised the historic importance of Ya'nienhonhndeh as possibly the last place that has remained intact – in other words, the forest and its ecosystem maintain the conditions that are akin to those before the arrival of European invaders. In 2016, archaeological surveys carried out by the archeologist Michel Plourde and his team from Laval University led to the discovery of rock paintings on a cliff as well as other types of evidence of the millennia-old presence of the Wendat people.

The ecological continuity of an intact forest gives it many extraordinary attributes through which it can support a great diversity of microhabitats and plant, vegetable and mammal species. Among the most important organisms there, you will find microorganisms – bacteria, fungi and lichens – which play a crucial role in recycling organic matter to sustain life throughout the forest. Furthermore, the diversity can work to regulate wildfires, rodent populations and illnesses.

complete their research. They also hope to verify the presence of woodland caribou in Charlevoix and to study the composition of certain lakes that have never been affected by logging activities. For two years, a group composed of non-Indigenous land and water protectors and members of the Wendake community has been regularly going to the forest of Lac à Moïse to determine the coordinates of tree-cutting operations via GPS readings and to report on the destruction of the territory.



It is difficult to describe the feeling you get when experiencing first-hand the reality how these guardians tend this territory since time immemorial. Here, you can find many traces of animal life in the unimaginable magnitude of moss and lichen. Beyond its splendour and deeply rooted history, this place is a veritable sanctuary for numerous species and for traditional Wendat practises. To claim that the unimpeded destruction of these last vestiges of unaltered living environments is a crime would be an understatement.



As expected, logging companies and the Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, have been claiming that a forest reaches maturity around 80 or 90 years of age to justify tree cutting as a means to avoid the risk of ‘losing the wood’. The same extractivist logic has been invoked in regards to the forest surrounding Lac à Moïse. The presence of the spruce budworm has also been cited as a justification for tree cutting, as it reinforces the idea that the ecosystem has already been decimated by the outbreak and is no longer intact.

According to this logic, tree cutting should be done quickly in order to reduce the infestation and recover as much of the wood as possible. In August 2019, the community of Wendake received funding from the federal government to conduct research for the following four years and called for the suspension of all logging activities for the length of time required to

Despite the moratoriums, people must act with utmost vigilance in order to prevent the destruction of the Ya’nienhonhndeh. The only way for us to take note of clear-cutting activities and the felling of enormous centuries-old yellow birch tree trunks for profit is by being present on the territory. As you journey into the depths of the Ya’nienhonhndeh, along waterways carved between the mountains for thousands of years, you can still walk the same portages that were taken centuries ago. Land Defenders and Water Protectors intend to maintain a presence on this territory to ensure that the complete destruction of this last pristine forest does not proceed in silence.

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok *And the Nitaskinan*

This fall, the Atikamekw Nation found itself at the center of the media's attention following the martyring of Joyce Echaquan, the mother of an Atikamekw family, who was the victim of racist insults in her final moments at the Joliette Hospital. After five centuries of genocide, the media and politicians seem to have finally woken up to the existence of racism and its murderous consequences. For one or two weeks, they lingered over the issue of racism directed towards Indigenous peoples in the Québec healthcare system, all the while avoiding any mention of the Atikamekw's land claims. Even the most open-minded journalists, commentators, and politicians were careful to dissociate systemic racism and the dispossession of territories, so as not to question the legitimacy of the Canadian colonial state's sovereignty.

The family of Joyce Echaquan and the Atikamekw were given a national apology, and the affair simply disappeared from the news cycle. Without delay, funds were allocated by the CAQ to sensitise healthcare workers to indigenous cultures and to improve the medical facilities on the reserves. However, it's clear that the CAQ is using the death of Joyce Echaquan to depoliticise and defuse the ongoing struggle against the colonial project and the genocide of the First Nations. Legault, accompanied by several nationalists, is instead propagating a war against the use of the term 'systemic racism' to designate the cancer that is eating away at Québec society and its institutions. The political repercussions that follow from the use of the term pose too great a danger for the smooth pursuit of the project of dispossession.

THE CAPITAINÉ WORKSITE

Monday, the 24th of August 2020, following a family demonstration for the protection of the forests in the Lanaudière region, 30 land defenders rallied under the group Mobilisation Matawinie and occupied the Capitaine logging site where work was due to begin. The name for this forestry site is cynically borrowed from Capitaine Lake, which has been greatly affected by the clear-cutting of the forest and the destruction of the streams that flow into it. The forest is bordered by an ecological refuge and several lakes where spawning grounds have been identified. Recently, these territories, already parceled out through economic neo-colonisation, were cleared to make way for forest roads, a crucial step in the race to eradicate the boreal forest. Halting the construction of forest roads is therefore an essential step to ending deforestation and the destruction of waterways and wetlands.

Since the blockade, the Atikamekw Dubé families, who are the guardians of the territory to which the Capitaine work site belongs, have only obtained a pause on the logging due to take place in the winter 2021 season. Other Atikamekw families, worried by the logging taking place on their territories and inspired by the unfolding of the blockade, are examining their options. Next spring, all signs indicate that those who remain vigilant will have to respond to calls for assistance and reinforcement.

SYMBOLIC ACTION

The objectives of the symbolic action to occupy this clear-cut site are not only to remind the forestry industry that their destructive actions are being closely monitored. People assume that wildlife reserves are protected areas, but nothing could be further from the truth. The destructive undertaking of the forestry companies is entirely legal while acting without observing any rules or regulations. The territory targeted by the forestry management plan stretches over the entire RCM of the Matawinie, a little more than 712,000 hectares. Orchestrated by the Ministry of Forests, Wildlife, and Parks, more than 50% of it will be razed.

THE NITASKINAN

At the end of August, land defenders blocked a forestry work site, an area of 427 hectares, located in the Nitaskinan, the unceded territory of the Atikamekw community. The Atikamekw Nehiro-wisiwok nation, composed of almost 7000 people, is located in the communities of Manawan, Obedjiwan, and Wemotaci. They have occupied the Nitaskinan since time immemorial, and it has never been ceded nor made the object of any treaty.

The Atikamekw Sipi – Council of the Atikamekw Nation has been negotiating for more than 35 years to obtain a tentative agreement on sovereignty with the federal and provincial governments. In 2014, the Atikamekw nation issued a Declaration of Sovereignty, reclaiming its autonomy and territorial self-determination.

If nothing is done, an area bigger than 5000 football fields of land will be razed. Let us recall once again that the new forestry plan of the CAQ includes cuts in protected areas and parks. It is imperative that we do everything we can to bring our support to the Atikamekw Nation in order to stop the destruction of Nitaskinan.

PRIORITY LANDS

The Atikamekw Sipi – Council of the Atikamekw Nation consider that at least 30–40% of the territory must be safeguarded for the pursuit of their activities and to maintain their ties to the land. Logging has been and continues to be the greatest source of environmental stress. The majority of the Nitaskinan is located in Mauricie, where only 9% of the territory is protected.

As in all the uncaded territories of the Indigenous Nations, the colonisation of Nitaskinan continues unabated, not only through deforestation and the construction of hydroelectric dams and mines, but also through the development of the tourism industry. The Nitaskinan counts a dozen Controlled Harvesting Zones, 82 outfitters, and more than 12,000 cabins. It also includes the Saint-Mauricie Wildlife Reserve, to make no mention of the many campsites and beaches developed along the Saint-Maurice river.

ATIKAMEKW NEHIROWISIW DECLARATION OF SOVEREIGNTY

We, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw, constitute a Nation on its own in virtue of the Atikamekw Tiperitamowin, the Atikamekw government. We, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw, maintain our sovereignty over Nitaskinan, our ancestral territory passed down to us by our ancestors since time immemorial.

Nitaskinan is our most sacred patrimony and heritage. Our Creator wished for us to live in harmony with Nikawinan Aski, our Earth-Mother, and accorded us the right of occupancy and the will to protect her. Nitaskinan fashioned our way of life and our language; it is what distinguishes us from other Nations.

Atikamekw Nehiromowin, that common language that unites us and drives the entirety of our existence, is an expression of our heritage. Through our oral traditions, the transmission of our culture, of our values, and of our foundational knowledge is continuous from the dawn of time. It is in this way that the patrimony and heritage of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw has been perpetuated. These are riches that we wish to pass on to our future generations. The application of our sovereignty is evinced through our occupancy of Nitaskinan, the practice of our traditions, and the establishment of relations with the other Nations guided by our oral traditions and the Wampums. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw have sought to maintain harmonious relations with neighbouring Nations: the Innu to the east, the Eeyou to the north, the Abenaki Iriniw to the south, and the Anishinaabe to the west.

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw intend to maintain and exercise their territorial government over the entirety of the Nitaskinan. Towards this end, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw have the will to make our people into an essential political and economic body.

The consent of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw is a requirement for all development, use, and exploitation of the resources situated in Nitaskinan. The sustainability of Nitaskinan's resources must be ensured, and the traditional occupation of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw respected.

The protection of Nitaskinan, the defence of its way of life and its aspirations will at all times lead the actions of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw and their current and future institutions. To this end, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw will use every means that they judge to be appropriate in the defence of their rights and interests.

We are not Canadians, we are not Quebecers we are Atikamekw Nehirowisiw. Atikamekw Nehirowisiw belong to Nitaskinan.

Nisitomokw, take note, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw, Nitaskinan

Living from the territories

Interview with Tina Nottaway

My name is Tina Nottaway. I'm an Algonquin, within the Algonquin nation, originally from Barrier Lake Band, but I live in the territory within the Lac Vérendrye Park. Well, over 20 years now, we moved out of the reserve because of many things that were happening within the community. So we moved out, and ever since then, we have been living on the territory. We don't have no running water, we don't have no electricity. When I was young, I grew up in the bush not far from here, from this checkpoint. I was raised by my grandmother. All my life I was exposed to our way of life: how to take care of the animals, how to take care of the land, how to take care of ourselves, how to take care of everything, life in general. So it's really important for us to maintain this way of life and have that connection with our Mother Earth.

There's one of the problems that we have is that people don't understand how and the way we live, and how we survive in this life. Because not everybody lives in the cities, not everybody lives in town, and not everybody lives on reservations. But there's a lot of us that still do live on our territory and still carry on our way of life. And this is why we're here today. We've been here last year, and we've been trying to voice our concern for the last 3-4 years about the moose. And just to make the general population understand, see through our eyes what we're trying to protect. It's not just for us native people, but it's for everybody. So we continue to have what we have today. This is what we're trying to preserve. And it's a sacrifice that some of us have to make in order to for this to happen. Like my family already committed not to harvest the

moose, but we do still have meat. Some of our people share, and this is how it's done. This is why we're trying to make the people understand. It's not you, we're not against you. What's happening right now, there's so much violence, there are so many hunters that are mad... it's not personal, we're not taking it personally for them. It's a bigger picture.

HOW DO YOU SAY MOOSE IN ALGONGUIN?

Kacabagonégabwec. It's more like you're describing something or you're describing someone. Because there is no specific word like in English... so the way we try to explain something is like describing like. I can't even explain it... You know when it's deep the snow, and you're able to stand out of the snow... It's hard to explain. It's like you're describing things, in our language.

I think the moose are aware. I think that's why the elders are speaking to us and telling us their dreams they have. These are messages they tell us that speaking to them in their dreams. There is a connection there, that they have. As our elders, these are the things that they look for, that they keep an eye on. They believe in these dreams that come to them. So the moose are speaking, the mooses have their ways. It's like my grandmother said that time when one of my aunties had a dream that she was in a tent, they were camping out in a tent, and then this moose would come running in their tent, trying to look for shelter, trying to find covers, trying to find someone to protect them because they are being hunted, overhunted.



This is what the Ku'kums are talking about here. So these dreams, this is what keeps us connected and keeps us going. And for the moose, they can't speak so we have to speak for them.

That the biggest animals that we have here in the territory and they need a lot of space. So they need forests, they need mountains, because in the winter time, they go out to the mountains to bed down. But a lot of places where they stay, you know and they live, there's a lot of clear cuts that happened over the years. So the moose, it's not just the moose but there's others like bears, wolves, and lynx, you know. They all play in the circle of life. So if one is disrupted, then the other one will start falling too. So it's all connected too.

There has to be a balance. Like I always talk about balance because it's part of our Anishinabe ways: that we have to find balance in the things that we do. Mainly, this is, for me anyways, reasons why we want this moose moratorium. I know there are a lot of other issues, that other people face all the time, like the logging in some communities, the water that's being destroyed, the mining that's taking place. These are all things that people should be concerned about. It happens to every community, it happens in different territories. It happens basically all over the world. It's mainly. It has to be stopped. Period.

Privileges and ancestral rights

Interview with Chuck Ratt

As many hunters you know that we talk to, the arguments are that they have a right to hunt, a right to come in La Vérendrye to harvest moose. But we see it otherwise; we see it as a privilege. For us, people that live here, that occupied land, it's a way of life for us, it sustains our families. It's what we call our inherent right. Our inherent right gives us the right to harvest the moose, feed our families, share with others when in need. But the hunters are so ignorant in understanding the difference between an inherent right and a privilege. See, a privilege is giving to them through an act, which is an act of law; it's man-made. When we speak our law, we speak about natural law, that's where our inherent right comes from, natural law. Our constitution is embedded in nature.

There is a fish that carries our constitution. (Among the Anishinabeg, the bones of fish such as the sturgeon provide information according to their disposition). For man-made law, it is written on a piece of paper and can be changed at the will of the people, at the will of politicians. And this is where their privilege comes from, it's an act. So, when they come into the park, what they don't understand, they have to pay for that privilege. So in reality, it's not a right. It's something that the Canadian and provincial government have been misleading their people to believe that they have the right to come here and hunt. If this was the case, and if it was true, that every man has the right to hunt wherever he pleases, then why do they have no hunting signs, no trespassing signs on private properties that municipalities sell out to individuals, private land owners.

So, for us, a privilege can be revoked and this is what we're asking and telling, and demanding, and taking the lead on to revoke this privilege that the organisation SEPAQ (Société des établissements de plein air du Québec) has given to their hunters, to come here and exercise their privileges as they say. But you know it's interfering now with our way of life. It's becoming cultural genocide. They are attacking our food source. They're depleting our food source. Our food source is our identity. The moose has been sacred to our people for many years. He has provided clothing. He has provided tools. He has provided food and he also provides medicine to our people. A lot of this stuff, that non-natives and the sports hunters are unaware of, what a moose carries for us. In return, we give the moose respect. We learn through our shaking tents how a moose wanted his body that he used after his spirit has left, he has given us his meat to eat. How we are to cut it up, how we are to divide it up to different families, share it among each other. Use all his body parts, his organs.

And put away what's left over. It's something that we practise, and a lot of us follow that teaching. Moose is very important for our people. And it would be a great loss to all of us. Not only our people, but non-Natives too. It was a way that we help the newcomers when they first came here. The moose was in abundance all across Canada. Now it's only certain pockets now, you find moose. In parks, in lands set aside for conservation. They are no longer looked at by non-natives as essential food source. It's looked at as a game, a trophy. When they kill a moose, they ride around with the head on their truck for days, until the

head is rotten. And then they cut the horns off, and they throw the rest away. Little do they know they are throwing away food.

The moose is also very intelligent. A lot of people look at them and they say: it's such a big ugly, clumsy-looking animal... But don't let them fool you. They are as graceful, and as swift, and as silent as a mouse when they go walk through the forest. They can sneak up on you. They know where people are. They hear people from far away. The moose know when they're safe, and where they're safe. They know where to search for security. Our grandmother always told us: when you're in the bush, and you live there, the animals come close. Because predators will tend to stay away. Same thing with the moose, from wolves and bears. If you are there, they are going to be near. The moose will stay near to you, wherever your camp is. That's how they survived for hundreds and hundreds of years. They know when to migrate into other areas for the winter, search for food. What is becoming difficult for them, with all the clear cutting, logging and forestry activities?

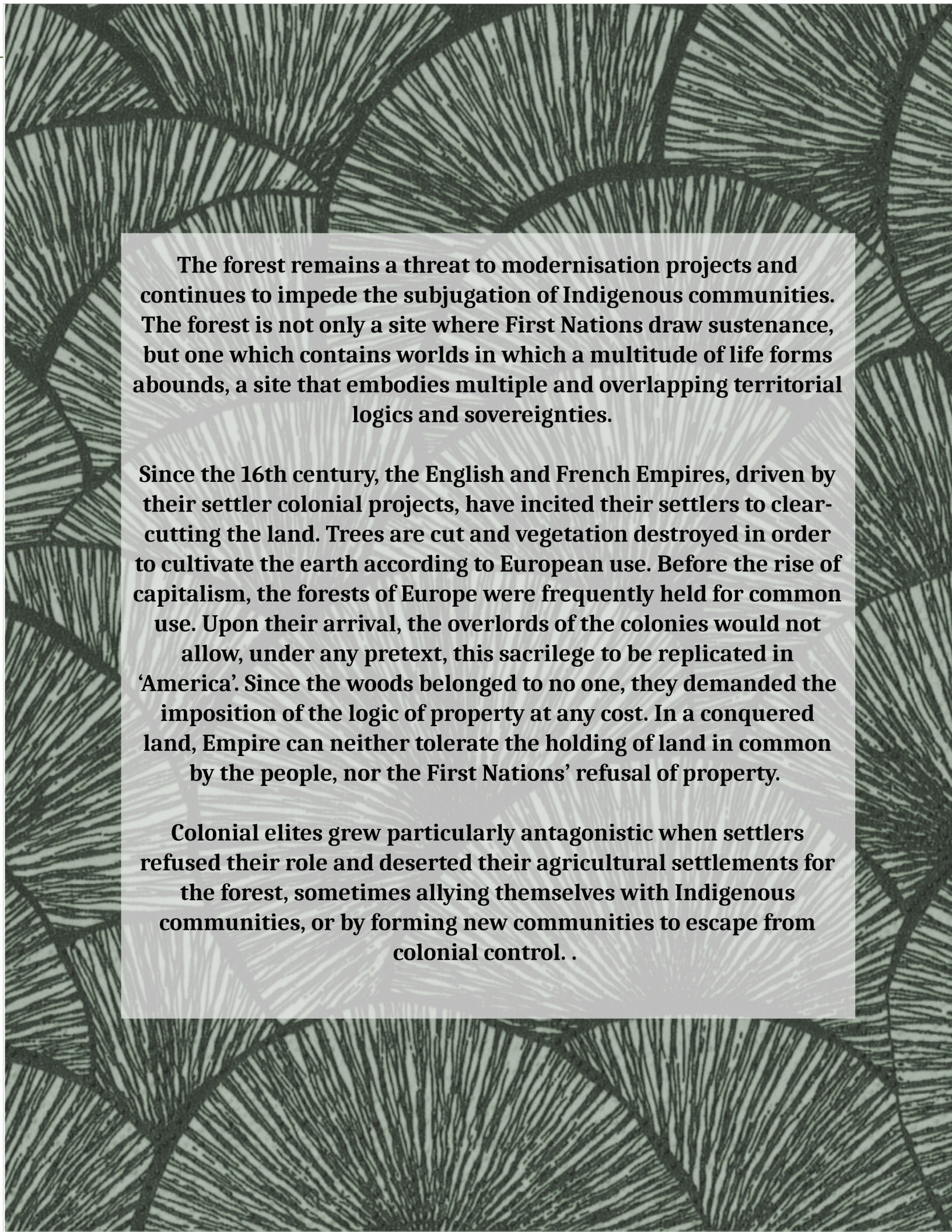
This is the way it was years ago, when there was a lot of moose. They were all around. So the moose are aware of what's going on. All the animals have that sense of what's happening and sometimes they have more sense than humans. They sense danger, they sense the weather, they sense when they're going to have a calf, or the safe place to have a calf. So they are aware of all their surroundings, all the time.

The life here for the moose is becoming very difficult. And their ways, their habit, how they move around,

they had to change their ways of how they move through the season, and where they move to. They're evolving in a sense that... to something that's come upon them that's very negative. It all stands from man, man and their destruction. This is why we've put up the moratorium. The moose will come into a lot of our people's dreams, he knows where to go. He knows where his spirit travels, he knows who could help him. And he knows who won't help him. So, he is very intelligent. If someone would know how a moose lives, how he speaks, and understand his calls in fall. We call their calls in fall their love calls, but there is much more meaning to that for a moose.

You know, I've called moose for many years now. And it's almost like a language. I'd say it is a language. But it's moose language. They have different tones, different ways they sound, for different meanings. We understand that. I understand it when I go hunting in the search for a moose. It's something very special., I'm very proud to be able to understand their calls, what I've been taught by my ancestors, grandparents, my father. You're grandparents, and grandfathers, can only teach you so much. But it's the moose that'll teach you a lot more.

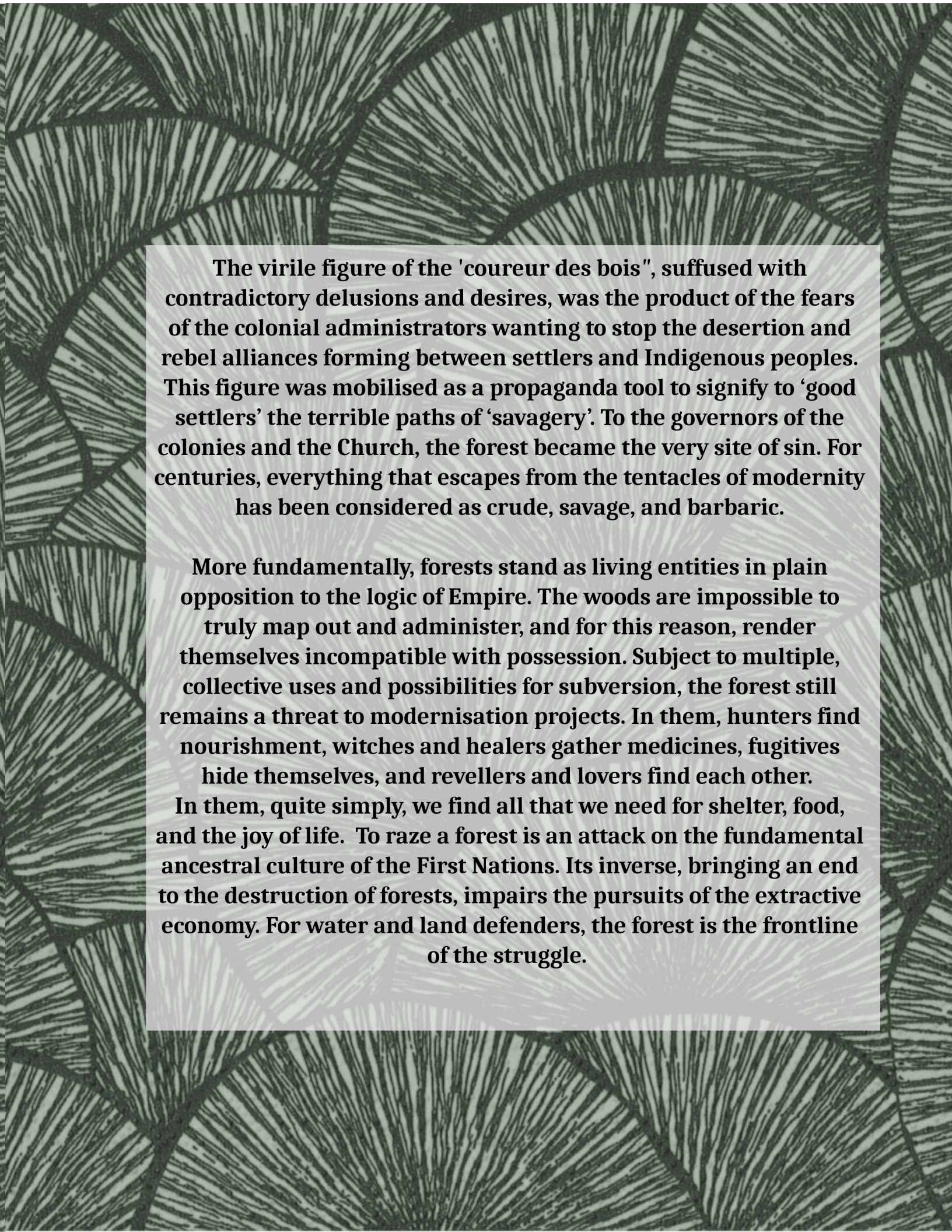
If you spend time listening to them, without hurting them. Listen to them at night, in the morning. They do speak. And it's a language not everybody knows. We know when a moose is hurting. We know when a moose needs help. It's something that our people have knowledge of. They have their ways of showing us, and our people have their ways and knowledge to identify, and recognise, without interfering with them, without having direct contact with them. We understand the moose. Modern science does not understand the moose. They only understand formulas, they only understand statistics. Our people go on facts, and traditional science is what we call it. Many call it traditional knowledge, but it's actually a science that has all been proven. It's all factual.



The forest remains a threat to modernisation projects and continues to impede the subjugation of Indigenous communities. The forest is not only a site where First Nations draw sustenance, but one which contains worlds in which a multitude of life forms abounds, a site that embodies multiple and overlapping territorial logics and sovereignties.

Since the 16th century, the English and French Empires, driven by their settler colonial projects, have incited their settlers to clear-cutting the land. Trees are cut and vegetation destroyed in order to cultivate the earth according to European use. Before the rise of capitalism, the forests of Europe were frequently held for common use. Upon their arrival, the overlords of the colonies would not allow, under any pretext, this sacrilege to be replicated in 'America'. Since the woods belonged to no one, they demanded the imposition of the logic of property at any cost. In a conquered land, Empire can neither tolerate the holding of land in common by the people, nor the First Nations' refusal of property.

Colonial elites grew particularly antagonistic when settlers refused their role and deserted their agricultural settlements for the forest, sometimes allying themselves with Indigenous communities, or by forming new communities to escape from colonial control. .



The virile figure of the 'coureur des bois', suffused with contradictory delusions and desires, was the product of the fears of the colonial administrators wanting to stop the desertion and rebel alliances forming between settlers and Indigenous peoples. This figure was mobilised as a propaganda tool to signify to 'good settlers' the terrible paths of 'savagery'. To the governors of the colonies and the Church, the forest became the very site of sin. For centuries, everything that escapes from the tentacles of modernity has been considered as crude, savage, and barbaric.

More fundamentally, forests stand as living entities in plain opposition to the logic of Empire. The woods are impossible to truly map out and administer, and for this reason, render themselves incompatible with possession. Subject to multiple, collective uses and possibilities for subversion, the forest still remains a threat to modernisation projects. In them, hunters find nourishment, witches and healers gather medicines, fugitives hide themselves, and revellers and lovers find each other.

In them, quite simply, we find all that we need for shelter, food, and the joy of life. To raze a forest is an attack on the fundamental ancestral culture of the First Nations. Its inverse, bringing an end to the destruction of forests, impairs the pursuits of the extractive economy. For water and land defenders, the forest is the frontline of the struggle.

Hunting the Hunt

Anishinabe Sovereignty put into action

In the fall of 2019, some Anishinabe families from Barrière Lake and Kitigan Zibi established themselves at the entrance to the roads leading into the park's moose hunting areas. At that time, their plan was to show their opposition and convince the hunters to back off, but without blocking access. The next year, government indifference at all levels prompted the elders to decide that all the roads should be blocked. Some had seen panicked moose in their dreams, calling for help. Shortly after, their children took off at top speed through the forests, finding and expelling the sport hunters who had been chosen at random by the government to abuse the Anishinabe woodlands.

One camp was established, then a second. The movement soon went viral, especially among the Anishinabe youth, who spread out along Highway 117 to set up new camps, creating eight in total. Community members from Barrière Lake, Kitigan Zibi, Kitcisakik, and Simon Lake joined in. Their efforts formed a ring of united Algonquin communities, drawing strength from their experiences of genocidal violence that continues to this day.

The movement in defence of the moose has seen the Anishinabe assert their sovereignty once again in their own territory. In doing so, it sweeps away the arbitrary divisions between the La Vérendrye Wildlife Preserve (managed by SÉPAQ, the provincial agency in charge of parks and wildlife reserves), the designated 'controlled harvesting zones' and the outfitting operations, because all there has ever been is one vast Anishinabe forest, scattered with countless lakes. In the portion of the Wildlife Reserve midway between Montréal and Abitibi, the territory of the Anishinabe Nation of the

Ottawa River Watershed is vast. From north to south, it extends over some 300 kilometres: from Val d'Or, the mining capital of Abitibi, cleared less than a century ago, to Mount Laurier, the northern limit of the Laurentians, colonised under the tutelage of the Catholic Church. On either side of the 117, the Anishinabe backcountry goes all the way to Temiscamingue, 300 km to the west. To the east, it extends for an even greater distance overlapping with Nitaskinan, the territory of the Attikamekw people, and extending on towards the Saguenay.

WHEN ENVIRONMENTALISM DESTROYS ECOLOGY

Around a fire, elders lay out the causes of the recent drop in moose population. Thirty years ago, in order to secure funding, various environmental groups (including Greenpeace) ran major campaigns to ban the sale of trapped furs. This war on furs was never really about protecting the ecosystem, but rather stirring up the indignation of White people so the organisations could secure a steady flow of new members and donations. The more legal victories those groups had scored against trapping, the more that hunting, fishing, and trapping came to be seen as 'sporting' activities rather than necessities of life on the land.

Commercial trapping in La Vérendrye Park was banned when it became a wildlife refuge in 1979. As a result, the population of beavers increased as did their predators (wolves, lynx, and coyotes). The resurgence of carnivores put pressure on fawns (juvenile moose), with many killed in their first years, leading to a major long-term drop in the moose population. It is a

bitter irony for those lovers of ‘wild nature’, who try hard to deny human predators any part in the non-human world.

To protect its ‘green economy’ from the Anishinabe blockades, SÉPAQ sometimes has to stop pretending that its purpose is to preserve natural parks for family camping trips. While they were cutting new roadways to help hunters get around the blockades, a SÉPAQ agent hid in the bushes at nightfall. His goal was to film any Indigenous people who might try to cut down trees and block the road, but while filming he captured a 5 year-old Anishinabe girl urinating. The scandal spread through the area’s Indigenous communities and brought back memories of sexual abuse suffered at the hands of priests and pastors, as well as the murders and sexual assaults of Anishinabe women carried out more recently by the provincial police in Val d’Or.

Anishinabe would not have dared to do again, given the fierce repression they faced for it back in 2008, when the provincial police pepper-sprayed their families. Visibly perplexed, one of the anti-blockade ‘blockaders’ explained of their desire to kill their prey: ‘Well, it’s the Indians who gave us the tradition of hunting, so it’s because of them we’re doing it now!’

In the days that followed, revengeful and bitter hunters who had circumvented the barricades threw moose legs at Indigenous people from the windows of their truck. The hunters have supporters in high places. The government, through its media arm, never stopped clamouring, ‘the fundamental right of all Quebecers to go hunting’. The state considered a thirty percent reduction in hunting licences to be an adequate concession.

SÉPAQ acts as if it is promoting ‘sustainable development’ only to prolong its exploitation of stolen lands. The moose is designated as a natural resource free to be harvested every year, along with the mineral taken from the earth, the trees from the clear cuts and the water captured for hydroelectric dams.

After a week of blockades, SÉPAQ agents resorted to bringing dogs to threaten the Anishinabe while secretly organising the transport of rifles for hunters, who were allowed to cross the blockades under the pretext they were going to fix up their cottages. After a few weeks of threatening to run over Anishinabe people with their trucks in order to get at their prey, the hunters organised their own rally on September 18 under the banner of ‘the right to hunt’. Although hundreds of people were expected, only a dozen turned up. They blocked Highway 117, which the

Now ‘It’s the Algonquins’ turn to do their part’, said Pierre Dufour, the minister of Forest, Wildlife, and Parks, who went so far as to remind ‘American Indians’ that ‘It’s 2020’ and that they have to behave ‘in a civilised manner’ and not ‘as if it were 200 years ago. The protection of moose on Anishinabe territory means refusing to be coerced in the name of progress by asserting ancestral sovereignty where the past returns to liberate the future. To stop sports hunters’ steady eroding of ancestral sovereignty, the moose protectors organise hours-long patrols down

dirt roads around the perimeter of their families' territories to flush out poachers. Some say that beavers are allies in the struggle and that they sometimes cut down trees, while bears and wolves dig trenches around the SÉPAQ bases, forcing them to make long detours.

HUNTING THE HUNT

The Anishinabe people who live in La Vérendrye Park not only see the moose as a source of food but as conscious beings in their own right. We were told that the Anishinabe word for moose *kacabagonégabwec* means a strong, majestic animal whose behaviour can teach us how to live. The moose can, for example, show us certain medicinal plants. It was the moose who showed the Anishinabe how to use balsam fir to disinfect wounds and how to take black spruce during pregnancy.

beautiful pelts had provoked a 'war' between them and the beaver people, who were a nation unto themselves, holding their own councils and maintaining diplomatic relationships with human and non-human animals.

At one time, reciprocity with animals was a daily necessity. On it depended the abundance of wildlife and the survival of humans, who were special because of their precarity rather than their supremacy. This perspective where hunting is a way of living rather than just a form of subsistence – the synergetic point of view – is still alive all across the Indigenous world, from the Amazon to India and Oceania, despite being ceaselessly targeted for genocide. And it is that has become all the more vital since the world war against wild animals began, causing more of them to vanish in the last fifty years.

But when subsistence hunting has to fight against sport hunting, as when Anishinabe spot the tracks of White poachers in the dust of the roads or their airplanes in the sky, the essential difference between them is revealed: the synergetic point of view collapses. The Anishinabe and the moose renew the alliance they shared long before the settlers declared war on both of them. As the moose – buffalo of the north-east – has provided its original peoples with meat, hides, and tendons for food, clothes, and crafts since time immemorial, it is highly respected and all its parts must be eaten or used.

Just as the Anishinabe have always known that their existence on the territory depends on the other species that live there, settlers have always known that a sure way to assimilate a people is to eradicate their animal allies. In the seventeenth century, Anishinabe people said that the early-European colonisers' greed for

The traditional way of life of the Anishinabe of the Ottawa River Watershed is based on relationships forged out of subsistence hunting. For Anishinabe hunters, without good (and sometimes personal) relationships with animals, without knowing their families, their hiding holes, their

inclinations and their habits, creatures would not offer so many tracks and signs for how to go about collecting them without threatening their survival.

In return, the animals treat humans as equals, permitting the harvesting that in turn assures their perpetuation. They speak to the Anishinabe most often in their dreams, and such dreams have almost the force of law among Anishinabe hunters and mothers. In the Amazon, Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro describes how the synergetic point of view considers culture to be shared by all living beings acting among themselves. Only the appearance of species – the nature of their bodies – is different.

Beyond these differences, it is possible to translate, have a dialogue and hold assemblies. When these relationships break down, negotiations are required to restore dialogue. Hunting relationships are necessarily based on hostility. For de Castro, since those dealings are based on hostility, they require the holding of councils and a call for diplomacy. A Wolf Clan mother said that if the moose disappeared, they would be 'alone in the forest'. It is plain to see that the blockade was always going to win, for the Anishinabe are good hunters. By gathering around the fires at the barricades and blocking sports hunting for a month – until the end of hunting season in mid-October when their camps could be dismantled – the Anishinabe effectively enforced their ancestral sovereignty on their land.




Each day that saw fewer moose killed was considered a victory, as the blockades fulfilled the demand for a moratorium that was rejected by the government. At the barricades, no one expects any good will from the government: the five-year moratorium will be enforced regardless. After the Anishinabe moratorium, the territory will re-emerge full of life. Moose foals will have survived and they, in turn, will give birth to young ones.

The Anishinabe of Barrière Lake also call themselves 'People of the Water'. What will happen to the Anishinabe forest, still governed by a traditional way of life, when the settlers come to expropriate and privatise the fresh water sources? Our task for the coming times starts here and now. The forest can teach what is required to defend it, if we are willing to listen.


THE SEVENTH FIRE

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson tells us that hundreds of years ago, when the earth was still thriving, seven prophets came to tell the Anishinabe what the coming centuries held for them. This is known as the Seventh Fire Prophecy, with each fire corresponding to a period of history. The prophets came to warn the inhabitants of Turtle Island to be wary of the violence of those coming from other continents. This prophecy accurately foretold the horrors and violence that modernity brought to the First Peoples, but it also signaled that the collapse of the colonial world was inevitable.

The Seventh Fire is understood as the era of rebirth. Rooted in the Indigenous principles of peace, justice, and integrity contained in the Mino-bimaadiziwin (the Anishinabe 'way of a good life'), this resurgence is destined to transfigure the colonial world. With the ongoing splintering of the 'Canadian territory' which is revealing a multiplicity of ancient sovereignties, transformation is inevitable. Any of us can help make it happen, if only by defending an urban forest from colonial infrastructure. And from such fragments of desirable worlds, we can create a common world.



If we are to rise to the roles such prophecies ascribe to their allies, our learning must be on another level than the liberal discourse of 'understanding Indigenous realities'. We need to radically transform our way of life. Considering that we are nothing but illegitimate settlers, while not taking into account how we intend to live in what's left of the world would be an illusion leading to powerlessness.



What's really at play in the Terrain Vague?

The Steinberg woodland against the engine of the economy

We know that the operations of a metropolis like Montréal run at the pace set by the circulation of capital. Condos sprout up where factories have disappeared; neighbourhoods become the domains of artists clinging to money and power, while more and more public space is given over to the industry of the spectacle. We already know how each new project announced by the City of Montréal will end: concrete, cash, and 'spectacle'. And yet, Montréal still houses interstitial spaces between its rigidly defined allotments, places where the planners of mega projects, the financial sharks, and their police do not yet have a say. It is the case for the Terrain Vague, located in the east of the neighbourhood of Hochelaga and baptised as such by those who make free use of it. Against the entire logic of private use, this empty space is inhabited by a multitude of life – youth gather to play, families picnics, joggers go for runs, wild gardens grow, and parties are thrown at night. It is home to an all-too-rare fauna and flora, existing outside the 'green plans' of the metropolis.

One part of this territory – referred to as the Steinberg woodland – is situated to the east of Hochelaga, caught between residential and industrial zones, and it has been promised a darksome fate: serving as one of the pillars of the Logistique du Capital. In effect, the city

and its traditional allies, the Port of Montréal, the CN, and the Chamber of Commerce, plan to build a Cité de la Logistique, which has now been renamed Éco-Parc-Industriel in an attempt to give it a 'green' aesthetic. In the last few years, despite ecological and regulatory obstacles that should have slowed the progress of work on the site, all of the south zone has been torn up by the construction company Ray-Mont Logistique. The government has even amended several laws to remove legal roadblocks that would have put the brakes on this destruction.

All in all, the project consists of extending the port of Montréal to accelerate the flow of merchandise. More precisely, on September 23rd, the CAQ initiated bill 66 aimed at relaunching the Québécois economy through the acceleration of infrastructure projects. The 'improvement of access to the port by the extension of Souigny Avenue and Assomption Boulevard in the Hochelaga-Mercier-Maisonneuve district' is one of the highest infrastructure priorities on the Island of Montréal. Among the work sites in preparation are, a new access ramp to highway 25 and a new Hydro-Québec station.

Many consider recent protest in the Steinberg woodland as simply a critique of the developmental



vision of the city and its parks, pitting investors and 'reasonable' business people against a handful of angry citizens, with the latter often painted as inveterate malcontents. In reality, what is currently unfolding in the Terrain Vague is of an altogether different magnitude. The project for the enlargement of the port is part of the Maritime Strategy of the Saint-Lawrence established by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments. It functions as a new project for the colonisation and modernisation of the territories, a continuation of the famous Plan Nord announced years ago by the Charest government. The goal is to enlarge the port while excavating the river to allow for the passage of even larger ships which will permit the acceleration of mineral extraction in the north.

This new version of the Plan Nord for 2020-23 has been announced under the ignoble title, 'Inhabit our North'. To inhabit this north, 'our North', the government plans to invest one billion dollars over three years in logistical and highway infrastructure. This represents 76% of the budget of the Plan Nord, while 18% will be allocated to populating the territory. To add insult to injury, the Plan Nord seeks to reserve 30% of the northern territory 'to environmental protection, to the safeguarding of biodiversity' but

above all 'to the enhancement of diverse forms of development'. The real menace weighs heavily on the north, and it is quite clear that its opening to extraction is being orchestrated by the government. Defacing 70% of the territory, funnelling its resources towards the south to enrich multinational developers, incentivising industrial workers to settle in a permanent manner, and reserving large portions of the lands under the pretext of protecting them while, in fact, only accelerating their exploitation.

The extremely reductive designation of the ancestral territories of numerous Indigenous Peoples to the term 'the North', erases distinctions that have existed for thousands of years: the Inuit Nunangat, the Eeyou Istchee, the Nitassinan, the Nitakinan, and the Nitaskinan. For the government of Québec this territory remains simply the indistinct northern zone of a project it has repeatedly been unable to realise, what Louis Émond Hamelin once called a 'Québec total'. Obviously, the Whites are not going to the north along natural routes; the roads they are planning entail massive cuts to the forests, and open onto the territories that are slated to be mined. The function of the apparatus that the government and business are implementing with their plans for the development of the North will ensure its integration as a periphery

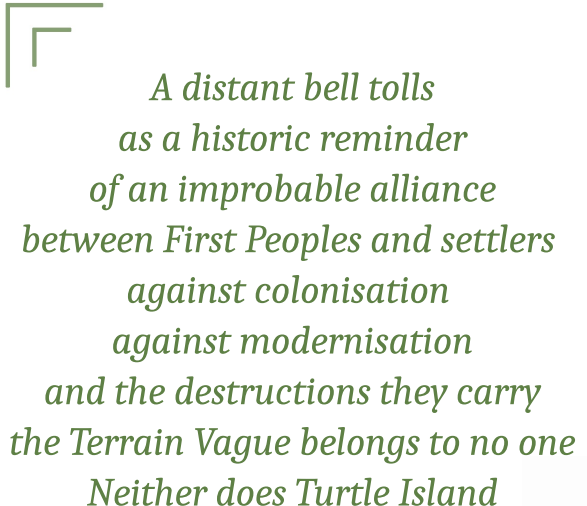
and its subsequent transformation into little more than a reservoir for resource extraction. This is a process which has been renewed for decades, or more accurately, centuries, and one that places these territories into a relation of dependence with the metropolitan centres of the South.

Despite the severe consequences in relation to indigenous sovereignty or climate change, the objective here remains to go as big and as fast as possible. At the heart of the Maritime Strategy, which aims to expand the capacities of the ports on the Saint Lawrence, the Terrain Vague is destined to become the anchoring point for this 'new economy' of destruction. While struggles are being waged against extractivism elsewhere, the metropolis is developing its space to accelerate the transport and financialization of those resources. Apparently, when it comes to the 'end of the world', some only want to accelerate its realisation.

Away from that cacophony, the Terrain vague is carried by a gentle magic, whose secrets the inhabitants of the area share with one another. Its uses are fertile and multiple. Over time, this small territory has become a life-giving place, a space to escape noise, make a fire, celebrate, walk one's dog, letting them run beyond the limits of a leash, or quite simply to find oneself a shelter from the frenzy of the city. It is rare to find on this slab of concrete we sometimes call 'Montréal' the existence of a space that is allowed to just be, a place of life that resists its destruction, a place of magic where we can still hear each other's whispers. It is easy to understand the meaning of the actions that have multiplied in the Terrain vague this fall: tree planting, the construction of structures, protest rallies, displays of banners, ceramics workshop, and walks centred around the identification of animal and plant species... and even a blockade of the construction work one sunny morning. However, despite the plurality and the force of the protests in recent months, every day the space

remains under greater threat. Given its strategic importance to the neo-colonial economic plans of the next few years, much more will be needed to truly defend this place.

In 2012, in the middle of a revolutionary crisis unleashed by the student movement against proposed tuition fee hikes, riots erupted against the announcement of the Plan Nord by the Charest government. At that time, the Plan Nord was recognised for what it was, that is, a new extrativist push by the Québec state. At the same time, the riot squad of the SQ, the provincial police, brutally intervened to dismantle the highway blockade of route 138 in Innu territory. Opposed to a work site for new hydroelectric lines, the protectors of the Innu territory were once again brutalised by the colonial police. At that moment, against a renewed push for the modernisation and colonisation of the territories, voices were being raised everywhere and met with repression. Yet at that time, no alliance could be made. Even if a few might have pointed out the connections between these struggles, no one succeeded in uniting or channeling the power that emanated from these outbursts of anger. The Terrain Vague in Hochelaga offers us the opportunity for a second chance, and it calls to mind the wisdom of alliances.



*A distant bell tolls
as a historic reminder
of an improbable alliance
between First Peoples and settlers
against colonisation
against modernisation
and the destructions they carry
the Terrain Vague belongs to no one
Neither does Turtle Island*

How to stop to the Mass Decimation of Forests?

Finding paths towards decolonial revolution

For many of us, taking the world back seems impossible. The destruction of all forms of life proceeds like a train towards the void pulled inexorably forward by the infernal engine of modernity. Even the usual forms of struggle seem obsolete and incapable of halting, even momentarily, the catastrophe. In 2017, in the first edition of the journal of the Committees for territorial defence and decolonisation, we laid out a plan of action in three steps: investigate, build autonomy, and block flows. Today, this course of action is just as relevant and necessary. And over the last few years, it has proven useful in multiple situations.

Before attempting to block a project, we must first investigate, identifying the political and financial interests behind the crumbling facade of economic progress. We must identify the openings and exits in spaces and situations; learn to recognise friends and enemies; determine how to connect to the people who inhabit the territory in order to defend it; understand and share what they love; and hate that which threatens them. At the same time, we must also build autonomy. This means bringing together forces in order to fight the destruction of territories, and disseminate this struggle. However, in order to definitively block the catastrophe and to permanently undermine colonial sovereignty and its extractive infrastructure, we must push our political reflections further. The subtitle of one of the articles of the first edition of the journal borrowed the Zapatista

expression: 'advancing while questioning'. It was back then clear to us that putting new ideas into practice would take time.

In the native Zapatista communities of 'Mexico', there are said to be three kinds of times, superimposed onto one another. *Exact time* is that which criss-crosses our lives and attempts to synchronise the entire world; the time of clocks, organising the economy and disciplinary apparatus. *Real time* is determined by the forest, and provides an organisation for the community. It is the time of seasons and the rhythms of the sun, the heartbeat of life that lends a cadence to each life. Finally, there is a *Revolutionary time*. This time has not yet come, but it is already circulating in the world. It is an ancient time, but its echo still resonates. And it is this time we must make manifest today.

BEGINNING AGAIN

The neoliberal 'end of history' is just a dead fragment of the past, but its cadaver is constantly trying to raise itself from its grave. This fatal suspension of time must be interrupted, permanently. It is not the time to behave like Christian millenarian or nihilist environmentalists, who live with their eyes fixed on the apocalypse or the end of the world. Instead, we must remake the horizons of our existence.

Return. Restart. Recreate.

To begin again is never to take something back, or to return to a situation exactly as we left it. To begin again always represents something new; this movement is always unprecedented. We are not produced by the past, but by that within it that has not yet occurred. To begin again means leaving suspension and re-establishing contact with our futures, moving once again from where we find ourselves at the moment.

organising, including a reparation of harms and the historical dispossession that has been inflicted on native communities. We were also taught that this is not simply a question of people finding themselves, recovering a lost identity, but instead one of bringing back world ways that were lost, preserving the knowledge of elders, remaking connections to language and the earth – and most importantly, a renewed commitment to the community.



This idea of a new beginning is inspired by the idea of the ‘back to the future’ so central to the indigenous resurgence movement. Firmly in opposition to ‘reconciliation’, which is fundamentally asymmetrical and instrumentalised by the colonial states of Canada and Québec, resurgence can only be understood as total decolonisation. According to elders who instructed us, this resurgence is supported by tradition: languages, cultures, know-how and ways of

Far from the nation-state sovereignty of modernity, native sovereignty, as put forward by the resurgence, combines a re-appropriation of territories through use and an affirmation of native identity, including a cultural and spiritual revitalisation.

A new beginning holds something that precedes what came before and returns to that moment to deepen and remake time itself.

PROVOKING EMPIRE

We strive to serve as those who refuse to let the living and the sacred to be destroyed, who reject the pointless forms of protest that do not block this destruction; our role is to create 'events'. The Empire is a global hegemonic system, the web of power that constitutes the modern and colonial apparatus of domination. Empire is where nothing happens, where emptiness rules, where things 'work' as they are intended to.

Provoking Empire means throwing a wrench into the normal functioning of things, where 'normal' means daily exploitation, creeping destruction, silent increase of atomisation leading to a dominance of the individual. Bringing about a revolutionary time means creating confrontation, attacking symbols, infrastructures and enemies who threaten the forms of life we hold dear. We must harm the expansion of the capitalist-extractivist economy to the extent that it becomes untenable, and we must do this in the metropolis, in the cities, in the reserves, in the countryside, as well as in the forest.

We must also anticipate the new fronts of capital in the form of the 'green economy', in which, despite its utopian promises, winds and tides are nonetheless monetised, strangling our futures. The continuation of this economy depends on its ability to (1) extract resources and (2) make them circulate. Our tactical considerations must flow from these seemingly obvious findings, but they require extraordinary thought and action.

Our ways of organising must allow us to support current struggles across the territories beyond colonial borders, so that these struggles can flourish by providing them with resources that will allow them to hold out.

CREATING ALLIANCES

What does ancestral sovereignty mean, beyond simple recognition? What role does each of us play in the current fragmentation of Canada? Is it enough to lend strength to the resurgence that is underway? We believe a basic question must be asked: should each community find its own way to fragment 'Canada' and 'Québec', while creating links among fragments?

Responding appropriately to the situation demands that we take seriously what it means to live in a certain space in the context of a community. This is not a question of principles or personal opinions, but simply ways of living. The urgency of the global climate situation and the way it puts the conditions of our life into question only confirms that we must return to traditions that are far older than those of modernity.

The density of our group allows us to collaborate with other groups during struggles, whereas those allies who themselves as individuals often have limited effect. Decolonisation and ending modernity, demand something beyond these individual positions. We must ask: how are we to live, not as claimants but as protectors of the territory and not as citizens but as people living on the territory? How can we function as groups, collectives, tribes, bands, gangs, and networks bound together by oaths taken during life and struggles in common?

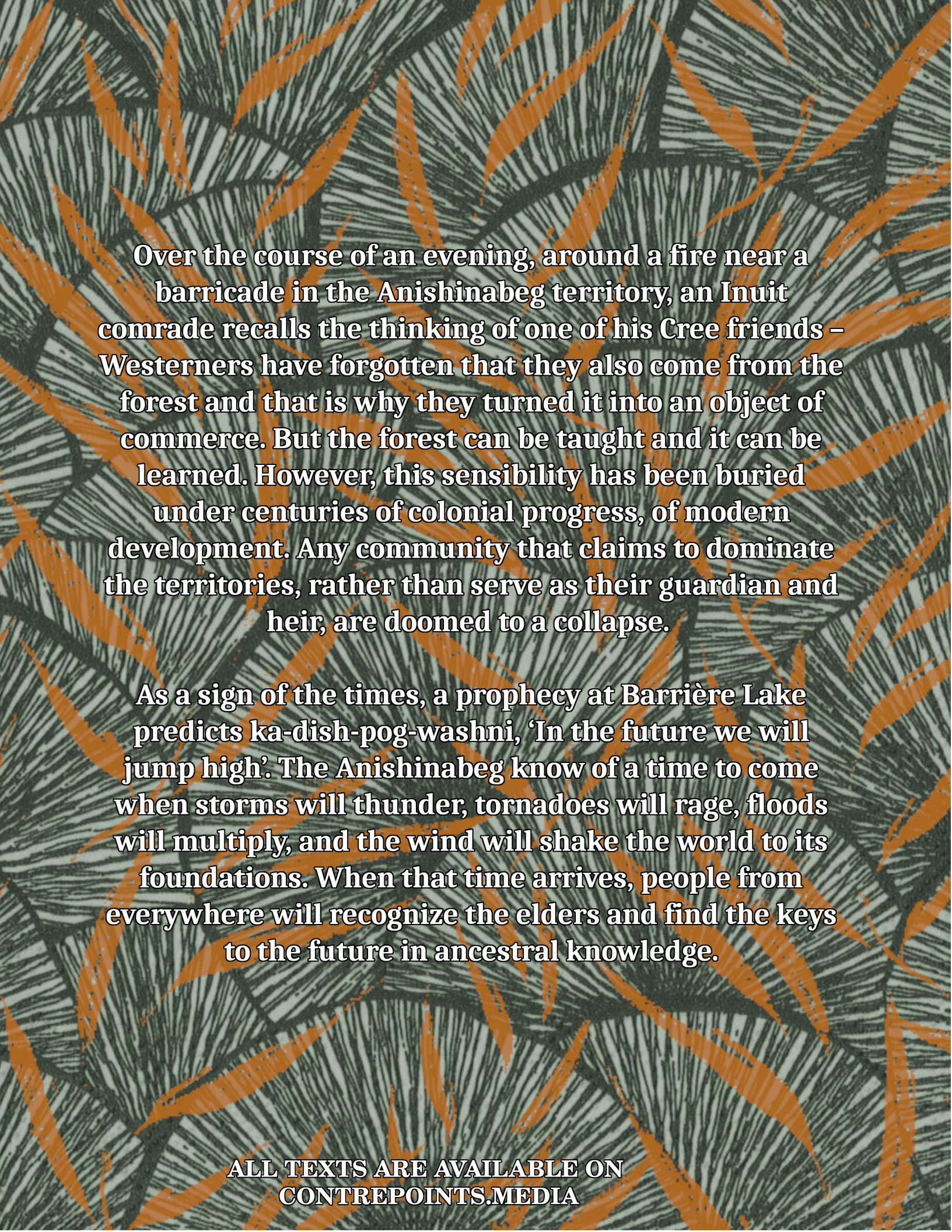


Lastly, we must remember that allies are, by definition, those bound together by a promise of alliance, that is, a group that 'gives its support to another, and takes its side'. For thousands of years, native communities have been organised around alliances.

These days, the role of the ally seems to have taken the form of a caregiver characterised by politeness and self-effacement to the point of semi-invisibility. But allyship shouldn't mean stepping back, but instead 'stepping up' and 'standing next to', recognising ancestral sovereignty and following the directives of elders in order to concretely take action.

It should mean finding ways of living and paths of action that lead to decolonisation, starting from our diverse positions within the current colonial order. On the ground, alliance should not mean disappearing; this is merely a novel form of dodging the issues.

Instead, allyship must come to mean becoming something that puts an end to the destruction. Something so powerful that is no longer necessary to identify explicitly as anti-capitalist or anti-colonial, because our lives speak louder than words in the war against the modern colonial order. And finally become what we all need to be, so that the imperial machine will only be a nightmare of the past.



Over the course of an evening, around a fire near a barricade in the Anishinabeg territory, an Inuit comrade recalls the thinking of one of his Cree friends – Westerners have forgotten that they also come from the forest and that is why they turned it into an object of commerce. But the forest can be taught and it can be learned. However, this sensibility has been buried under centuries of colonial progress, of modern development. Any community that claims to dominate the territories, rather than serve as their guardian and heir, are doomed to a collapse.

As a sign of the times, a prophecy at Barrière Lake predicts ka-dish-pog-washni, 'In the future we will jump high'. The Anishinabeg know of a time to come when storms will thunder, tornadoes will rage, floods will multiply, and the wind will shake the world to its foundations. When that time arrives, people from everywhere will recognize the elders and find the keys to the future in ancestral knowledge.